

Comm Secy

EXHIBIT

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HB

88

HB 88 Testimony, Revise close of late voter registration
House State Administration, Room 455
January 13, 2009 @ 8 am
Secretary Linda McCulloch's Remarks

Good morning Mr. Chair, members of the committee.
For the record, I am Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch.

I respectfully disagree with the bill sponsor and I am here today to oppose House Bill 88, an act revising the close of late voter registration.

The Secretary of State's office has done extensive training on late voter registration procedures—and has concluded that changing the deadline for late registration could very well deter some Montanans from voting.

Working with clerks and recorders and election administrators on ideas to streamline election-day registration and to mitigate potential problems, the Secretary of State's Office is convinced that a date-change could disenfranchise voters who may have an expectation that registering and voting can both be done on Election Day.

There have been 3 federal or state elections with same-day voter registrations: The General Election of 2006, the Primary Election of 2008, and the General Election of 2008. (There were also municipal elections and special elections held in 2007.)

4,301 registrants participated in same-day voter registration in the 2006 General Election.

2,679 registered on Election Day for the 2008 Primary Election.

In the 2008 General Election, 7,419 people successfully registered on Election Day.

This increased participation of this election option tells us that Montanans are using same-day voter registration.

If the Legislature votes to pass House Bill 88, voter turnout and participation could be in jeopardy. Casting a ballot should be easy and accessible for every eligible voter.

Many of our youngest voters rely on Election-Day registration to cast their vote.

26% of late registrants are 18 to 24 year-olds.

25-30 year-olds account for 16% of late registrants.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I ask you to oppose House Bill 88.

Voting is one of our most fundamental responsibilities and Montanans are entitled to cast their vote on Election Day. Voting should be easier and not more difficult.

I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time today and for supporting Montana's elections.